

¡viva venezuela!

■ Vol 5 ■ Issue 3 ■ Autumn 2015



Latin America Unites Against US Intervention

Also inside:

■ Rally Celebrates 10 Years of the VSC

With thanks to



www.venezuelasolidarity.co.uk
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**Venezuela
Solidarity
Campaign**



Venezuela: Vigilance Needed

This year (see pages 6-7) the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign has celebrated its tenth anniversary, but our key tasks of opposing US intervention in Venezuela, anti-democratic right-wing destabilisation and international media misrepresentation are needed now more than ever.



President Maduro on the election trail

As the country approaches National Assembly elections in December, President Maduro and other key figures in Venezuela's elected Government have warned of the dangers of continuing US interference in Venezuelan affairs and requested that its national sovereignty be respected.

Additionally, there is concern about the anti-democratic activities of elements of Venezuela's right-wing opposition and their allies on the extreme right of politics internationally, including Colombian far-right paramilitaries, that the Government believe have been infiltrating Venezuela.

As we cover in more depth in this issue of *Viva Venezuela* (see pages 4-5), alongside these developments in Venezuela, there has also been a regional counter-offensive across Latin America and the Caribbean from extreme right wing elements. What all these have in common is a refusal to accept the democratic will of the people in electing and re-electing numerous progressive governments. Additionally, many of these right-wing, anti-democratic groups receive much of their funding, and other forms of support, from various bodies in the U.S.

The situation however is not the same as in previous decades, when U.S. support helped anti-democratic elements overturn progressive governments, in that the region is not prepared

to be seen as the U.S. 'backyard' anymore. Its governments have stood firmly together on a number of issues, from opposing unilateral U.S. sanctions against Venezuela to recent right-wing destabilisation efforts in Ecuador.

All previous elections in Venezuela have seen a sustained increase in misrepresentation across the international media, often based on myths propagated by the country's right-wing opposition that the elected government stifles democracy.

As elections approach, and to counter this misrepresentation, it is therefore vital to reiterate that Venezuela has held 18 elections in the past 16 years, all of which have been well observed by a range of international and Latin American organizations under a system which former US President Carter referred to as the best in the world.

It is also important to continue to tell the truth about positive changes in the country that continue despite the economic difficulties the country has faced, most notably in tackling poverty (see page 3) and inequality.

Our task here in Britain is to remain vigilant regarding right-wing threats to democracy and social progress in Venezuela and campaign to ensure Britain and the EU respect Venezuela's national sovereignty.

Viva La Solidaridad!

This magazine is published by the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign

Contributors to this issue were:

- Paul Dobson
- Francisco Dominguez
- Siân Errington
- Sue Grey
- Matt Willgress *and*
- Tim Young

VSC would like to thank Telesur English and Venezuelanalysis.com for their reporting of Venezuela, which is referred to throughout this publication.



Venezuela Solidarity Campaign



**Unite the Union GPM London Print Branch
Celebrate Venezuela - Unity is Strength**

John Ayling, Branch Chair
Tommy Murphy, Branch Secretary



Operation Miracle (Misión Milagro)



Operation Miracle (Misión Milagro), the Cuban-Venezuelan aid programme for the blind, has now helped 4 million people since its creation 10 years ago. It provides free treatment for people suffering from treatable blindness or visual deficiencies and living in poverty.

The 4 million treated so far have mostly been from Latin America, but the project has also helped people in Africa and the Caribbean.

The treatments include consultation and general paediatric ophthalmology, neuro-ophthalmology, as well as low vision and retina treatment.

Over 3 Million Venezuelans Vote in PSUV Primaries

After two rounds of primaries involving record numbers of people, the governing United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) has selected its candidates for December's National Assembly elections.

Throughout April, 13,600 grassroots assemblies met across the country for the initial selection of candidates. Turnout for the second round of primaries on 28th June exceeded 3 million as Venezuelans queued patiently to select the final list of candidates in all of the country's 23 states.

Meanwhile, the opposition alliance, Roundtable of Democratic Unity (MUD), has disappointed its own voters by selecting 75% of its candidates in secretive leaders' meetings, holding primaries for the remaining candidates in only 33 circuits in 11 states, and ignoring calls for women's and youth quotas.



Extreme Poverty Reduced to Record Levels

The number of Venezuelans living in extreme poverty has dropped to a historic low of 4.5%, despite the economic pressures on the country announced planning vice president Ricardo Menéndez. This compares well with neighbouring Colombia, where extreme poverty is at 8%.

When President Hugo Chavez was elected in 1998, 21% of households were registered as experiencing extreme poverty.

Under Chavez, the Venezuelan government created a series of anti-poverty programs called missions that target specific aspects of poverty. Government funding for social spending including the missions has increased greatly over the last decade, while many indicators of poverty have fallen.

The massive reduction in poverty has been praised by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America.

Its head Alicia Barcena said "What you are doing here, going out into low-income neighbourhoods, to the places where there is the most poverty, is an excellent idea that should be considered by other countries."

 **NUT** Islington Association

**If Venezuela
can build a
million houses
why can't we?**



Continent-wide Right Wing Destabilisation in Latin America

By Francisco Dominguez, VSC Secretary

The destabilisation that has intensified in recent times against the elected Government in Venezuela has spread to other countries in the region.

On-going destabilisation plans in Venezuela, Ecuador, El Salvador, Argentina, Nicaragua, Brazil and across the region have the same aim: to oust democratically elected governments.

They also share similar characteristics: opposition forces behind destabilisation are unable to obtain electoral majorities, but enjoy robust financial support from national and international right wing currents, primarily based in the U.S.

The ALBA (Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas) bloc of countries, at an extraordinary meeting in August, denounced these plans as “non-conventional war strategies [which] intend to destabilize and overthrow the

democratically elected progressive governments of the region.”

The ALBA statement includes a specific rejection of “any interventionist agenda intended for El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras,” suggesting concern of a further intensification of right-wing attempts to roll back progress across the region.

However, inclusive social policies and the deepening of democracy have continued to secure electoral majorities for progressive left governments in Latin America, despite the many difficulties they face.

It is therefore highly likely that the extreme national and international right-wing elements



will resort to desperate, criminal actions as part of their destabilisation efforts.

Alongside this, internationally much of the mainstream media join the right-wing media in Latin America itself in relentlessly pumping out negative reporting, misrepresentation, distortion and false positives, with the aim of



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CAMPAIGNING IN SUPPORT OF DEMOCRACY AND
PROGRESS IN VENEZUELA**

NO TO US RIGHT-WING INTERFERENCE

Matt Wrack General Secretary Alan McLean President

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isolating - and minimising international support for - the region's elected governments.

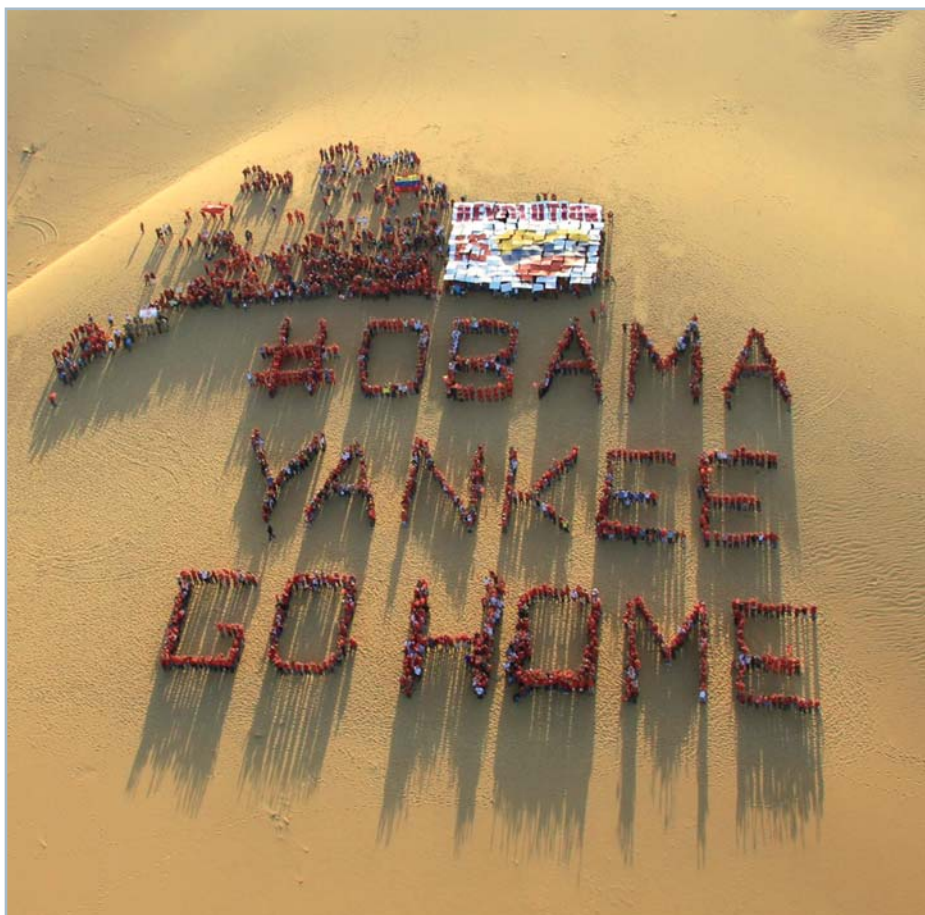
This is especially true of Venezuela, which has also been the target of an 'economic war' that has dislocated its economy, mainly through induced scarcity of food and other basic staple items.

And – as in Allende's Chile – the plan is to make the poor bear the brunt of the scarcity so as to erode the government's electoral base.

Earlier this year, Latin America's rejection of Obama's Executive Order declaring Venezuela "an unusual and extraordinary threat to the US's national security" led to Obama seemingly taking some steps towards a policy of normalisation towards Venezuela in line with his current Cuba policy.

Yet sanctions and the Executive Order against Venezuela remain and Latin American presidents keep denouncing US bodies, notably the NED, USAID and SOUTHCOM, for organizing and supporting the current wave of destabilisation.

In the run up to important elections in Venezuela and across the region our vigilance and solidarity will be more important than ever.



GMB Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

GMB supports **democracy** &
social **progress** in Venezuela
and the work of the
Venezuela Solidarity Campaign



Tim Roache REGIONAL SECRETARY Andy Irving REGIONAL PRESIDENT

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UNITE STANDS IN SOLIDARITY

with the social progress and
democratic advances of the
Venezuelan people

Len McCluskey, General Secretary
Tony Woodhouse, Chair of GEC

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400 Strong Rally Celebrates 10

A Rally for Venezuela drew hundreds of people to London's Hamilton House in June to mark the 10th anniversary of the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign where thunderous applause and cries of "Viva Venezuela, viva la solidaridad!" brought the house down. The event called on the United States to end sanctions on Venezuela and all intervention into the South American nation's internal affairs.

Politicians, journalists, trade union leaders and peace campaigners, along with the Venezuelan, Nicaraguan and Argentinian ambassadors, praised the "inspirational" example Venezuela's progressive change has provided, praising the Latin American country's achievements in poverty reduction and improving literacy and healthcare.

Labour Friends of Venezuela founder Colin Burgon opened the rally by slamming the recently imposed US sanctions on Venezuela, and was joined by Easington MP Grahame Morris and newly elected East Leeds MP Richard Burgon in hailing the challenge Venezuela posed to neoliberalism and privatisation.

Labour Party leadership candidate Jeremy Corbyn addressed how Latin America has been at the forefront of challenging the agenda of free market corporate domination globally, and in a particularly pertinent contribution, Labour

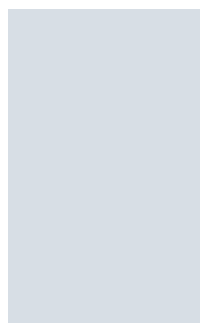
MSP Neil Findlay (a former election observer in Venezuela) contrasted elections in Britain, where "the closest we get to security is the string that attaches the pencil to the voting booth," with the high-tech system used in Venezuela.

He noted that this system had been praised by former US president Jimmy Carter as the most secure and fraud-resistant on earth.

US peace campaigner Medea Benjamin of Code Pink slammed the ludicrous and hypocritical bid by the United States to paint Venezuela as a human rights abuser in order to justify intervention into its affairs, whilst prominent



US peace campaigner Medea Benjamin at the Rally for Venezuela



Hundreds tell the US to end sanctions against Venezuela

UNITEDLEFT

The progressive left network in UNITE the Union
www.unitedleft.org.uk

Martin Mayer, Chair & Paul Birkett, Secretary

Sends comradely greetings to all delegates to the TUC and Labour Party Conferences and calls for support for the Bolivarian revolution and continued solidarity with the people of Venezuela facing the threat of US intervention



**Scottish
Venezuela
Solidarity
Campaign**

We extend warm greetings on behalf of the committee, affiliates and supporters of Scottish Venezuela Solidarity Campaign to all those attending the annual conferences of the TUC and Labour Party in Brighton September 2015.

<http://scottishvenezuelasolidarity.org.uk>

ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE – SOLIDARITY FOREVER

Phil McGarry, Chair, On Behalf of SVSC Executive

Venezuela & Latin America: Perspectives from Europe's Left & Solidarity Movements

Saturday October 10, Unite House, WC1X 8TN

With

- Martine Billard, International Secretary, Parti De Gauche, France
- Marina Prentoulis, Syriza, Greece ● Sinn Fein speaker, Ireland
- Dr. Francisco Dominguez, VSC Secretary & co-author, 'Right Wing Politics in the New Latin America'
- Richard Burgon MP

Info and register at www.venezuelasolidarity.co.uk

Years of Venezuela Solidarity

British peace activist Bruce Kent ridiculed the idea that Venezuela is a threat to the U.S saying, "The idea that Venezuela threatens the USA rather than the other way round is frankly cobbles and we should say so very loud."

US writer and economist Mark Weisbrot emphasised the importance of Venezuela in terms of broader progressive shifts in Latin America, whilst Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament General Secretary Kate Hudson praised Venezuela's role as an international voice for peace.

Morning Star editor Ben Chacko said Venezuela was an example of putting the "real needs of real people above abstract and impersonal market forces."

"We need to tell that story not just for its sake but for our own as well," he urged.

VSC Secretary Dr. Francisco Dominguez concluded the event by reminding the audience that the run-up to parliamentary elections in



Jeremy Corbyn speaking at VSC rally

Venezuela at the end of the year is likely to see an increase in media misrepresentation.

After the event, Venezuela Solidarity Campaign National Co-ordinator Matt Willgress commented the huge turnout "demonstrates

how much support there is for Venezuela," adding that "in the run-up to the December elections, we need to strengthen our campaigning even further."

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WORKERS UNION**

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Venezuela!**



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General Secretary

Jane Lotus
President

**The PCS stands
in solidarity
with the people
of Venezuela**

Mark Serwotka, **General Secretary**
Cheryl Gedling, **International Committee Chair**



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¡viva venezuela!

Latin America 2015



Register and info at: www.latinamerica2015.org.uk

Join the VSC

- If you join VSC online at: www.venezuelasolidarity.co.uk for only £18 you receive a free DVD of *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*. You can also join by cheque for £18 (£9 unwaged) to *Venezuela Solidarity Campaign*, c/o Unite, 33-37 Moreland Street, London, EC1V 8BB.

Saturday 28th November TUC Congress House, London

With: ● Veronica Rojas, Nicaraguan Government Vice-Minister ● William Blum, author, *Rogue State & America's Deadliest Export* ● Rocio Maneiro, Venezuelan Ambassador ● Teresita Vicente, Cuban Ambassador ● Marina Prentoulis, Syriza, Greece ● Jeremy Corbyn MP ● Ken Livingstone

North East Yorkshire & Humberside Region

**send a message of solidarity
in support of our colleagues
in Venezuela**



Unite the Union North East Yorkshire & Humberside Region

Dick Banks
Regional Chair

Karen Reay
Regional Secretary



**Venezuela
Solidarity
Campaign**

